



May 1, 2017

The Honorable Thomas Rooney
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Rooney,

On behalf of the Northern Everglades Alliance, we are writing to offer our strong support of your efforts to restore Congress' Constitutional authority to make needed investments in our country's aging water infrastructure with respect to vetted by Army Corps of Engineers projects. We appreciate your work to address the challenges facing the Everglades and Lake Okeechobee. The Northern Everglades Alliance includes ranchers, and farmers representing one million acres of land ownership and decades of land stewardships in the Northern Everglades and advocating for the resources to preserve the rural way of life, protect water resources, conserve wildlife habitat, and promote outdoor recreation.

Our local economy depends on the work of the Army Corps. The agricultural industry contributes more than \$100 billion to Florida's economy and supports 2 million jobs. Ranching and beef production have been central to Florida's heritage for nearly 500 years.

Structural and nonstructural solutions are being applied in the Northern Everglades – South of Orlando. This is the heart of Florida's ranching and farming base and can serve as natural water storage system, where many wetlands can store and treat storm and floodwaters. Conserving ranchlands is an effective way to increase water storage north of Lake Okeechobee, while reducing floods and water releases into the rivers and coastal estuaries.

The annual appropriations process used to give us a chance to secure funding for these authorized projects, but since 2011 this practice has been banned under the earmark moratorium. The earmark moratorium presents a challenge for our economy, particularly when we have no recourse to advocate for necessary federal funds for projects that are endorsed by a range of stakeholders, and that benefit from state and local entities ready to meet their cost-share commitments.

Ranchers and farmers in the Northern Everglades support your efforts to boost conservation funding in the region and establish limited exceptions to the earmark moratorium for economically-vital water resources development projects.

Sincerely,

Mike Adams
Co-Chair, Northern Everglades Alliance
Adams Ranch, Inc.

David "Lefty" Durando
Co-Chair, Northern Everglades Alliance
Durando Family Ranches